

## EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS DIFFERENT SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

TWO

*Will there be anyone, who will come to you in heaven and say,  
"I love you because you had a part in my salvation"?*

-- Warren Shibley

*You have one business on earth -- to save souls; therefore, spend and be spent in this work.*

-- John Wesley

*Thank God for all the different levels of relationship. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as you "prayerfully target" those who need Jesus. Daily we should diligently pray through our concentric circles of concern:*

Self	Immediate Family	Relative	Close Friends	Business Acquaintances	Acquaintance	Person X
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*Do you love people so that you can win them to Christ, or do you win people to Christ because you love people? There's a big difference! Everyone has different levels or spheres of influence, and God wants to use Christians to love people through all these spheres, because all our relationships matter. He wants to use us to meet their needs in a righteous way for His sake – for the purpose of evangelism. By faith, let God enlarge your outer circle of love to take in all people, no matter their language, color, worldview or religion. But don't let anyone in to your close circle of friendship that isn't more on fire for Jesus Christ than you yourself (or at least wanting to be). Sure we need to limit our time with the carnal, the worldly, the luke-warm, the perverted, the lost ...or they will pull us down. **"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'"** (1 Cor. 15:33). We spend time with the non-spiritual as long as we are influencing them in the right way, rather than them us in the wrong way. And Jesus should always be the closest in that inner circle (and then your spouse if you have one).*

### HOW DO I BEGIN WITNESSING?

[The Confident Approach]

1. Take "FORM"

Family

Occupation

Religious Background

Message

Daily, God what's to allure and draw sinners to Jesus through you. Be natural, be joyous, be yourself. Are you good-natured? Do sinners irritate you? Do you like to laugh with them? I don't mean at them or at their perverse jokes. There are a lot of things to talk about and laugh at with them. Soul-winning should be joyous and fun. After love, I think joy is the most alluring quality in a Christian.

Try not to be abrupt or brash in your approach. Simply take a moment to prayerfully and sensitively adapt to the situation before you – and have your spiritual antenna up, so to speak. Purpose to be discerning, respectful and tactful. Listen-up. God will show you the right way to build a bridge from the spiritual thinker to the secular thinker. Then at the right time, you can gradually begin a clear explanation of the bad news and then the Good News – maybe by asking appropriate questions. Remember how sinners loved to hang with and be around Jesus Christ ...and he never compromised. They knew he really cared for them and wasn't there to reform, impress or condemn them. So why must I incessantly feel the need to carry on what Jesus didn't do? Jesus was there to save them and then sanctify them (in that order). We like to reform their behavior before we lead them to Christ, but sinners like to sin because they are sinners. It's their nature. That's why God wants to give them a new nature. Jesus catches his fish before he cleans them.

Be real, but show genuine interest in the person and their neutral (non-sinful) hobbies or in the positive things that fascinate them – whatever they are interested in. Isn't that how anyone would naturally make friends today (inside or outside the Kingdom)? In the world, people's favorite subject seems to be about themselves so don't look bored. Unbelievers really enjoy talking about themselves and normally I like to listen to much of what they say. They never mind me casually asking general questions about their **family**, their **occupation**, or even their **religious background**. And the rapport that is established in this initial stage becomes the bridge for me to ease the Gospel message across. Sure God might lead you to witness to total strangers at times with His word and we must trust that seeds will be planted and that some will be born again on the spot. But statistics show that most people who come to Christ (and who go on with Christ) do so through prayerful, friendship evangelism. Baby Christians who don't find a friend at church that they can relate in the first six months of being in Christ often go right out the back door.

Giving the valuable gift of time, taking interest in the sinner's interests says I care about you, But a lot does depend on my tone, expression, attitude, timing, natural tempo and how I word the questions (they should never start out too prying or personal). The Gospel clearly presented will offend some people and we aren't afraid of that, but let's just make sure it's the Gospel rather than us. If you offend people don't let it be because you are offensive, pushy, rude or unfriendly. If you are persecuted, let it be because of the Gospel's sake. My wife Liney says to me, *"If you get alienated from the person you are trying to witness to, let it be their fault rather than your fault. We aren't in it to please people but do everything you can short of sin to win their friendship and trust."* She is a great witness and has tried for years to befriend her lost brother and to respectfully share Jesus with him. But just he wouldn't have anything to do with her (unless he was trying to hurt her) until he, through his actions, finally cut off all contact with her. Together we still pray for him but it was never Liney's fault.

If we carefully build the bridge of friendship in preparation to verbally witness, but never get the Gospel across it — I mean we never verbally witness to the person and they don't even know why we are the way we are, this would be a waste (I'm not talking here about witnessing at the gas station to a person we might never see again).

But if we encounter someone new at work or in our extended family and we bombastically preach the Gospel at the sinner without first earning the right to be heard – without first building that bridge of trust with them – in preparation to verbally witness, our effectiveness might fall right in the river. This too could result in wasted efforts. Seeds from the Word of course could still be plant in their hearts, but in witnessing, God isn't looking for machine gunners as much as He's looking for sharp shooters. We can't be careless. He wants us to take the time to pray, assess the situation, get to know the person and tactfully build the right kind of bridge. This calls for evaluation and careful observation. Our aim should be to tactfully cultivate a relationship with a purpose.

TACT means intuitively putting yourself in the other person's shoes—not full-attack-mode, preaching at em or down to them. Sure there is a time and place for bombastic evangelism out in public. But most fruitful witnessing is about listening and asking the proper questions – matching the situation to the right verses in love – matching the hell-bound-ling to God.

Try not to be in a hurry around sinners, slow down! Act comfortable and casual in their presence. In building relationships with people, fast is slow and slow is fast.

***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”*** (Rom. 1:16).

***“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls”*** (Prov. 11:30).

***“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”*** (1 Cor. 1:18).

***“Witness” ..it's not so much something you do as much as someone you are!***

**Here is what I normally say, when I offer person X a tract on the street:**

Hi, how are you doing? May I offer you a free invitation? (as I reach out to hand it to them. They take the tract from me 99% of the time, because who doesn't want to receive an invitation. Then I say...) This invitation is twofold. Most importantly it's an invitation to begin an exciting two-way relationship with Jesus Christ. He loves you so much, let me explain...

Second, it's an invitation for you to come visit our cool church in the area...

(I proceed to tell them when we meet and where then I offer them a ride. I get another Christian of their same gender, if theirs is different from mine. If you sense they are comfortable talking with you and open, but need to go on their way, it would be wise to get their phone number or address for future contact).

## Here Are Some Traditional Opening Questions That Diagnose The Spiritual Condition

*"Have you given any thought to spiritual things since [refer to some applicable current news event]?"*

*"What do you think a person has to do to be a real Christian? May I show you some verses from the Bible regarding how to become a real Christian?"*

*"Have you made the exciting discovery of knowing Jesus Christ personally?"*

*"Have you come to the place where you know for certain if you died today you would go to heaven?" \**

*"If you were to die today and stand before God and He was to ask you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven, holy heaven?' what would you say?" \**

\*These last two "diagnostic questions" are from Dr. James Kennedy's excellent book, *Evangelism Explosion*, published by Tyndale House.

## THE CONTENT IN SHARING THE GOSPEL IS IMPORTANT!

[Clear Explanation]

The Gospel may be divided into three initial parts:

### 1. Need

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|----|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. | Forgiveness of sins                | Romans 3:23<br>Romans 6:23 |
| b. | Restoration of fellowship with God | John 10:10                 |

### 2. Provision

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| a. | Christ and His death on the cross | Ephesians 2:8,9<br>John 3:16<br>1 Peter 3:18<br>Romans 5:8 |
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### 3. Appropriation

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| a. | Repentance and faith | Acts 3:19<br>Romans 10:9-13<br>John 1:12-13, 3:3<br>Revelation 3:20 |
|----|----------------------|---|

***"Motivated by love, preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary—when the time is right because the need is there and the Spirit is leading you—use words that help people and Glorify God."***

*I'd rather see a Christian  
than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me  
than merely tell the way.  
The eye's a better pupil  
and more willing than the ear,  
Fine counsel is confusing,  
but example's always clear;  
And the best of all preachers  
are the men who live their verbal creeds,  
For to see good put in action  
is what everybody needs.  
I soon can learn to do it  
if you'll let me see it done in love;  
I can watch your hands in action,  
but your tongue too fast may run.  
And the lecture you deliver  
may be very wise and true,  
But I'd rather get my lessons  
by observing what you do;  
For I might misunderstand you  
and the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding  
how you act and how you live.  
--Edgar Guest, American Poet*

*Every action of love by a Christian in service to those who are poor or maybe the marginalized of society... is a sermon preached. Preach with your good attitude, with your selfless deeds and with words of truth. Why keep talking about yourself? In your conversation, make a bee-line to the cross. Brag on Jesus Christ and what He has lovingly done!*

**My gracious Master and My God  
Assist me to proclaim,  
To spread through all the earth  
abroad  
The honors of Thy name.  
– Charles Wesley**